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WILLIAM ROUGHEAD'S *friends*

Following our celebration of the life of William Roughead WS in the last issue of SIGNET MAGAZINE, the Signet Library has welcomed visitors to use the Roughead Collection. Roughead had many distinguished admirers, including authors and historians. By KAREN BASTON.

The WS Society is celebrating Roughead this year since it marks the sixtieth anniversary of his death in 1952. The Roughead Collection, now held in the Commissioners' Room, was gifted to the WS Society by Roughead's family in the same year. The collection comprises Roughead's books on criminology. A project is underway to add the collection to the Signet Library's online catalogue. One of the most enjoyable aspects of this work is finding the treasures tucked inside Roughead's books. Roughead kept an assortment of correspondence and photographs in his books. The inscriptions, letters, and postcards are addressed to Roughead from the authors of the books and they often give him credit for inspiring their authors.

Roughead was not alone in his pursuit of crime and exploration of criminology. His work inspired other writers to explore the dark side of human nature. Roughead was generous

with his materials and insights and he often lent books and provided feedback for his fellow criminologists. As evidence from his library of crime books shows, Roughead's network of correspondents included Edward Pearson, Horace Bleakley, H. B. Irving, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Edward Pearson

Edward Pearson (1880-1937) was a Librarian of Congress and, like Roughead, a true crime pioneer. Pearson wrote to Roughead in 1923 - the letter is in Studies in Black or Red (Roughead Collection, R340.9 P31) - to thank him for book recommendations and to announce his "plan to tread somewhat in your foot-steps - that is, one on American murder trials. Since a celebrated double murder in Massachusetts when I was a school-boy, twenty-five years ago, the subject has always fascinated me, and your books have tempted me to try the same field". Pearson's best known work, *Studies in Murder*, was published in 1924 and featured an essay on the axe murderer Lizzie Borden - the celebrated double murder case that had caught his

attention when he was a boy - which Roughead greatly admired. The two authors were firm friends and Pearson visited Roughead during his visits to Scotland. Roughead's copy of Pearson's edition of *The Autobiography of a Criminal*, Henry Tufts contains the inscription: "For: William Roughead, from his friend, admirer, and assistant toiler in the same vineyard. Edmund Pearson. March, 1930".

Horace Bleakley

The historian and criminologist Horace Bleakley (1868-1931) did research on Roughead's behalf. Roughead's copy of his *Some Distinguished Victims of the Scaffold* (Roughead Collection, R343.9 B61) is bound with a letter containing notes from the British Library. Another letter in the same book is from Bleakley's son who introduces himself and hopes to meet his father's friend on his next visit to London. Roughead acquired some of Bleakley's antiquarian books after his death including three pamphlets dated 1752 about the trial and execution of Elizabeth Jeffries and John Swann for murder (Roughead

Collection, R343.1 J388(1-3)).

H.B. Irving

Another of Roughead's correspondents, H. B. Irving (1870-1919) was the son of the famous Victorian actor, Henry Irving. The younger Irving also acted before turning to criminology and writing. Roughead's copy of his *Studies of French Criminals of the Nineteenth Century* (Roughead Collection, R343.9 Ir8) contains not only a letter from Irving to Roughead dated 31 July 1912 but also a photographic postcard featuring "Mr. H. B. Irving as Dr. Jekyll" which shows that he retained his taste for the theatrical. Roughead gave books as gifts as well as receiving them. His copy of Irving's *Last Studies in Criminology* (Roughead Collection, R343.9 Ir8) has a letter from Irving thanking him for the gift of a book.

Arthur Conan Doyle

The best known of Roughead's friends today is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930). The two worked together to put the famous Oscar Slater miscarriage of justice right. Conan Doyle introduced Roughead to the journalist William Park when he was investigating the Slater case. Roughead's copy of Park's *The Truth about Oscar Slater* (with the prisoner's own story) (Roughead Collection, R343.1 Sl15) contains letters from both Conan Doyle and Park and the inscription "To W Roughead from A Conan Doyle with best regards July 31st 27".

Roughead did not only keep messages from the authors of his books: he also kept correspondence with their subjects. His copy of John Buchan's biography of Andrew Jameson, Lord Ardwall (Roughead Collection, R340.92 B85) contains a letter dated 19th July 1909 from Jameson to Roughead which thanks him for his gift of his book on the Deacon Brodie trial and his loan of his *Introduction to the Porteous Trial*.

Roughead was acknowledged as a leader in criminological studies by the editor of *The Black Maria*, or, *The Criminals' Omnibus* (Roughead

Collection, R343.9 H66) who inscribed the work: "To William Roughead one of the first drivers of the Black Maria from Henry Hodge, Sept. 1935" when it was published. The work included Roughead's study of the Mary Blandy murder trial of 1752.

Since only some of Roughead's books have been catalogued so far, it is hoped that more of his friends will come to light. Roughead's influence on the development of the true crime genre is profound. The letters and inscriptions in his books reveal an international network of true crime pioneers who followed Roughead's example and who relied on his friendship and support.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle